

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An object model for capturing decision-related data related to a product design, comprising:

a question interface for capturing a question in a question object that encapsulates text-based information related to a design issue associated with said product design;

an answer interface for capturing an answer in an answer object that encapsulates text-based information addressing information encapsulated in a selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object; and

a decision interface for capturing a decision in a decision object that encapsulates text-based information defining a product requirement in response to information in said selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object.

2. (Original) An object model in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object is stored in a tool-neutral persistent form.

3. (Original) An object model in accordance with claim 2, wherein:
each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object is stored in a separate relational database, wherein associations between each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object are captured using foreign keys.

4. (Original) An object model in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said question interface captures an association of said question object with a decision object.

5. (Original) An object model in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said answer interface captures an association of aid answer object with a question object.

6. (Original) An object model in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said decision interface captures an association of said decision object with an answer object.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) A method for capturing decision-related data related to a product design, comprising:

capturing a question in a question object that encapsulates text-based information related to a design issue associated with said product design;

capturing an answer in an answer object that encapsulates text-based information addressing information encapsulated in a selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object; and

capturing a decision in a decision object that encapsulates text-based information defining a product requirement in response to information in said selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object.

9. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 8, comprising:

storing each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object in a tool-neutral persistent form.

10. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 9, comprising:

storing each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object in a separate relational database, wherein associations between each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object are captured using foreign keys.

11. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 8, comprising:

capturing an association of said question object with a decision object.

12. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 8, comprising:

capturing an association of said answer object with a question object.

13. (Original) A method in accordance with claim 8, comprising:

capturing an association of said decision object with an answer object.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium tangibly embodying program instructions implementing a method for capturing decision-related data related to a product design, the method comprising the steps of:

capturing a question in a question object that encapsulates text-based information related to a design issue associated with said product design;

capturing an answer in an answer object that encapsulates text-based information addressing information encapsulated in a selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object; and

capturing a decision in a decision object that encapsulates text-based information defining a product requirement in response to information in said selected question object and that is linked to said selected question object.

16. (Original) The computer readable storage medium of claim 15, the method comprising:

storing each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object in a tool-neutral persistent form.

17. (Original) The computer readable storage medium of claim 16, the method comprising:

storing each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object in a separate relational database, wherein associations between each of said question object, said answer object, and said decision object are captured using foreign keys.

18. (Original) The computer readable storage medium of claim 15, the method comprising:

capturing an association of said question object with a decision object.

19. (Original) The computer readable storage medium of claim 15, the method comprising:

capturing an association of said answer object with a question object.

20. (Cancelled)